

How To Deal With Disappointments

Disappointment is a very common experience of life.

There are many things in life that disappoint us.

Events disappoint us; we excitedly plan to attend some event only to find it fails to come anywhere near our hopes or expectations.

Things tend to disappoint us; we save up and buy something, only to find it doesn't match up to how it was advertised; what looked so good in the advert turns out to be cheap and malfunctioning.

Have you ever bought anything advertised on a cereal box? Then you know what disappointment is like!

By far the greatest disappointments we will ever experience involve people

People who let us down, don't do what they promised; people who don't appreciate what we do for them; people who tell us one thing then do the very opposite; people who hurt our feelings - intentionally or unintentionally through misunderstandings, broken promises or unkind words.

In life we all have to deal with people, so we need to know how to deal with the disappointments they will bring to our lives.

One of the secrets of success in life is learning how to deal with people who disappoint us.

One man in the Bible was a professional when it came to dealing with people.

His name was Moses.

Moses knew how to deal with disappointments. He was the most patient man alive in his day.

No man put up with more complaining than Moses. It seems that the favourite occupation of the nation of Israel was to complain about anything and everything Moses did.

It was this complaining that caused God to force them to wander in the desert for 40 years. As the Israelites failed one test God set them, God gave them another.

Hebrews 3: 7-11 [NIV] *“So as the Holy Spirit says, ‘Today if you hear His voice, **do not harden your hearts** as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years you saw what I did.’ That is why I was angry with that generation and I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.’ So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’ ”*

Israel was very quick to criticize Moses, their leader, challenge his leadership, doubt his decisions and question his motives.

The Israelites had many “*water problems*” during their exodus from Egypt.

The first was too much water to cross at the Red Sea.

Then only days later, the Israelites had another “*water problem*”.

Exodus 14: 9-12 [NIV] *“The Egyptians – all Pharaoh’s horses and chariots, horsemen and troops - pursued the Israelites and overtook them as they camped by the sea near Pi Hahiroth, opposite Baal Zephon. As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the Lord. They said to Moses, ‘Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn’t we say to you in Egypt ‘Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians’? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than die in the desert!’ ”*

Very little time had passed since the miraculous escape from Egypt as a result of the devastating plagues brought on by God.

This was the first hiccup in their triumphant march, and who received the blame? Moses!

What must Moses have thought? Is this the kind of thanks I get for all I’ve done for these people?

Exodus 15:22 [NIV] *“Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the desert of Shur. For three days they travelled in the desert without finding water.”*

This time, it was a lack of water. This was followed by another “water problem” at Marah.

Exodus 15:23 [NIV] *“When they came to Marah they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (Marah means bitter which is why the place is called Marah).”*

The water they did find was undrinkable, so who did they blame?

Exodus 15:24 [NIV] *“So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, ‘What are we to drink?’ ”*

Poor old Moses once again.

Why then did God lead the Israelites to Marah?

Exodus 15:25-27 [NIV] *“Then Moses cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water and the water became sweet. There the Lord made a decree and a law for them, and there he tested them. He said, ‘If you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His eyes, if you pay attention to His commands and keep all His decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord who heals you.’ Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there near the water.”*

From this passage of scripture and how God, through Moses, reacted, we can learn several facts about disappointment:

The greatest successes in life are often followed by failure

This was only three days after their victory over the Egyptians at the Red Sea.

They must have still been in great spirits, “*flying high*”, only to be suddenly brought down by failure to find something simple and stable in life - water!

Each new day brings its problems. After every “*mountain top*” there is always a valley.

Another example of this happening was, after entry into the Promised Land, by the next generation of Israelites.

They experienced a great victory against the largest and most fortified city in the land, Jericho, only to be humiliated by a defeat at the hands of the very small town of Ai as a result of being over-confident after their great success.

It is the “*Ai*”s of life that cause us disappointments.

The major problems we may look to God to solve but the small ones we feel self-confident enough to cope without God’s help and we end up disappointed by our failure.

When we experience a big success in life, watch out, we could be about to experience a failure.

Just like the Israelites, God tests us by allowing us to experience disappointments to see if we really trust Him by seeking His help in all facets of our lives.

Scripture does **NOT** say that the Red Sea crossing was a test.

God revealed His character and power at the Red Sea.

Man was tested at Marah to show his character and weakness.

The people didn’t have any faith in God at the Red Sea.

God opened up the pathway to show His power and protection of His chosen people.

The people showed their lack of faith in God at Marah only three days after God had shown how he would use His power to protect and provide for all their needs.

God’s character was shown at the Red Sea, man’s character at Marah.

God’s character is involved in the big incidents in our lives, our character is shown in the little day by day incidents of life.

The greatest services in life are often followed by forgetfulness

Exodus 15:24 [NIV] *“So the people grumbled against Moses saying, What are we to drink?”*

Israel had such a short memory of the wonderful things God had just done for them only a few days before. Three days on, Israel was doubting God and criticising Moses, the leader He had given them.

Their motto seemed to be *“When in doubt, grumble against Moses”*.

The poor man: one day he was a hero, the next a zero! One minute the star, the next the scapegoat.

It is human nature to quickly forget kindness expressed to us

Children forget what their parents have done to give them a good start in life.

Employers forget the past faithfulness and dedication of employees.

Married couples soon take each other for granted.

A study showed the average homemaker will in a lifetime: prepare 35,000 meals and make 40,000 beds! Are we taking someone for granted in our home?

How then should we deal with disappointments?

Don't curse disappointments

Romans 12:14 [NIV] *“Bless those who persecute you; bless and **do not curse.**”*

Don't try to get even or retaliate.

Moses could have responded by telling those who grumbled against him to *“find their own way back to Egypt if that is what they wanted”*.

Most of us when hurt by others who disappoint us create very inventive ways to get even.

I feel sometimes that in resentment we reach this peak of our creativity. *“I'll do this, this and this and they won't know what hit them!”*

But the moment we start to retaliate God stops defending us.

Who is going to make a better job of redressing the balance: us or God?

Romans 12:19 [NIV] *“**Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: It is mine to avenge; I will repay, says the Lord.**”*

When we let God settle the score, we are well represented.

Don't rehearse disappointments

Job 5:2 [Good News Bible] *“To worry yourself to death with resentment would be a foolish, senseless thing to do!”*

Ephesians 4:31 [NIV] *“**Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.**”*

When we go over a disappointment in our mind again and again it just becomes bigger, more negative and discouraging.

This is a very dangerous habit because grumbling can become addictive and very soon our whole life can be consumed with it.

Philippians 3:13 [Living Bible] *“I am still not all I should be but I am bringing all my energies to bear on this one thing: forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God is calling us.”*

We cannot change the disappointments of the past, but we can learn and mature from them.

We can influence the present with a positive, hopeful attitude.

We can then put the future in the capable hands of God, expecting His help and intervention.

Do not nurse disappointments

Ephesians 4:26-27 [Living Bible] *“If you are angry, do not sin by nursing your grudge. Don’t let the sun go down with you still angry. Get over it quickly. For when you are angry, you give a mighty foothold to the devil.”*

When we hold onto anger generated out of a disappointment, we allow Satan to influence us because anger very soon turns to resentment and bitterness.

Job 18:4 [Living Bible] *“Just because you tear your clothes in anger, is this going to start an earthquake? Shall we all go and hide?”*

We are only hurting ourselves when we continue to be angry over a disappointment.

I like the irony of the Living Bible translation of this verse.

Others see how we are hurting ourselves while the rest of the world goes on, mostly unaffected.

To hold onto a disappointment causes us to build a protective wall around ourselves so as not to be hurt again.

This destroys any meaningful relationships with God or other people.

If we are trying to please everybody we are setting ourselves up for disappointments.

God knows He can’t please everyone. Are we likely to do a better job than God?

I don’t even please myself a lot of the time. I’m often disappointed in me!

How can I expect to please everyone else or to avoid disappointments?

What do we do with disappointments?

What did Moses do?

Exodus 15:25 [NIV] *“Then Moses cried out to the Lord...”*

We disperse the disappointment

We give the disappointment to God. We don’t hang on to it.

1 Peter 5:7 [Living Bible] *“Let Him [God] have all your worries and cares, for He is always thinking about you and watching everything that concerns you.”*

When we are disappointed it is of little use talking to others about it, for they cannot do much to help.

We talk to God about it, who does have the power and desire to cause us to deal with disappointments and profit from them.

Romans 8:28 [Good News Bible] *“We know that in all things God works for good with those who love Him, those whom He has called according to His purpose.”*

“*We know*” - Do we? Whenever we read this statement in God’s word, we need to pause and ask ourselves do we know, do we have complete faith in this statement.

“*All things*” - This includes the many disappointments we will face in life.

“*Who love Him*” - We talk often to those we love and constantly share our lives with them. This includes God.

“*Called*” - It was God who called us, not our seeking God.

“*His purpose*” - Constantly we must seek God’s will for our lives not our own selfish whims. This may mean leaving our “*comfort zone*” and becoming involved in activities that are beyond our natural abilities where we are totally dependent on God-given power and abilities.

Let God reverse the disappointment

The life of Joseph is a wonderful example of God doing this.

Because of envy, Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery.

The next few years of Joseph’s life were all down hill because of people hurting him intentionally.

Joseph had every reason to be “*eaten up*” with disappointment but God in due time reversed all this evil that was done against Joseph and caused him to be placed in a position where he could save his own family as well as Egypt and the surrounding nations from famine.

Notice how Joseph sums up the events that happened in his life:

Genesis 50:20 [Living Bible] “*As far as I am concerned, God turned into good what you meant for evil, for He brought me to this high position I have today so that I could save the lives of many people.*”

There are people who’ll disappoint us and hurt us in life, intentionally or unintentionally.

They want us to fail.

They mean it for bad but God turns it into good.

If we are Christian, nothing comes into our lives by accident. It is all “*Father-filtered*”.

Even the hurts and disappointments are intended to teach us something, so let God reverse them for good.

When we handle our disappointments in the way God wants us to by:-

not cursing our disappointments

not rehearsing our disappointments

not nursing our disappointments

but allowing God to:-

disperse our disappointments

reverse our disappointments

then something will happen in our disappointed life experience.

Exodus 15:25 [Living Bible] *“Moses pleaded with the Lord to help them and the Lord showed him a tree to throw into the water and the water became sweet.”*

Notice, God did not specially create a tree to solve the problem of bitter water.

It was already there.

God had prepared the solution to their disappointing experience in advance.

If Moses had been wrapped up in self-pity he would never have seen the solution to his disappointment, not seen what could turn bitterness into sweetness.

When we curse, rehearse or nurse our disappointment we will continue to be blinded to the solution God already has for us to reverse the disappointment.

The greatest successes in life are often followed by failures.

The greatest services in life are often followed by forgetfulness

but

The greatest shortages in life are often followed by fullness

Exodus 15:27 [Living Bible] *“And they came to Elim where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees and they camped there beside the springs.”*

God gave them a vacation at *“palm springs”*.

This was paradise in the middle of the dry, forboding desert and God let them spend over a month there before they moved on.

How far is Elim from Marah?

Elim is only five miles from Marah!

Israel stopped at Marah complaining, grumbling, being negative when Elim was just around the corner, only part of a day’s journey away.

Too often, we stop too soon.

We stop at Marah, discouraged and disappointed and bitter and we stay there.

The message is: Don’t quit because Elim is just ahead of us in our journey in life.

How do we get from Marah to Elim?

God knew exactly where the Israelites were and where Elim was but God did **not** perform a miracle and bring Elim to them.

The Israelites got to Elim by continuing their journey and not giving up in spite of their feelings.

What disappointments are making us feel like giving up?

Our job, a relationship, a dream, unappreciated charity work, praying, Bible study, attending Church?

The fact is that most things are done in this world by people who don't feel like doing them.

Maturity is living by our commitments not our feelings

One morning Glen woke up and said to his mother, *"I don't want to go to Church today. I don't feel like it."*

His mother replied, "But you must go to Church". Glen replied, "No, I don't want to go to Church. Why should I?"

"For two reasons," said his mother, "one, you are forty-five years old and two, you're the pastor"!

Even if we don't feel like going on because we are in "*Marah*" which may be a physical "*Marah*" of pain or a mental "*Marah*" of stress in our job or relationships, God knows exactly where we are and what we are feeling.

Marah is on His map for our lives but so is Elim and He is telling us to keep on keeping on because Elim is just up ahead.

The real issue is how long are we going to stay in the bitterness of Marah's disappointment?

When are we going to stop **cursing** our disappointment
nursing our disappointment
and **rehearsing** our disappointment

instead of taking it to God and letting Him

disperse our disappointment

reverse our disappointment

then carry on and find our "*Elim*".

God led the Israelites to Marah as a test of their maturity

God will lead us through many "*Marahs*" in our life for the very same reason: to help us mature through disappointments.

Has something in our life become bitter now that was so sweet, perhaps our marriage, a friendship, a career, our health?

What are we to do?

Give it to God and He will show us, as He did to Moses, what can turn that bitterness of disappointment into sweetness once more.

What is God's solution to our bitterness?

It is a tree!

Just as God used a tree, that He had prepared long before, to turn bitterness into sweetness for the Israelites, so God took a tree on Mount Calvary and hung His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, on it to turn the bitterness and guilt of sin into the sweetness of righteousness.

If you haven't known the relationship of someone who will never let you down, never cause you disappointment, I invite you right now to begin that relationship with Jesus Christ.

All you have to do is to humbly invite Him into your life to be your Lord and Saviour, the One who directs your life from now on and who saves you from the bitterness of guilt, through faith in what He did for you on that tree on Mount Calvary.

Romans 10:11 [Good News Bible] *"The Scripture says 'Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed'."*

Why?

Because God has a great plan for each of us and He uses everything in our lives to further that plan, which starts on a tree on Mount Calvary.

Disappointments then become Jesus Christ's appointments and Elim is just down the road.